

Fact Sheet

United States Environmental Protection Agency
Region X
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98101
(206) 442-1270

Date: April 15, 1981

Application No.: ID-002540-2

FACT SHEET -- PROPOSED NATIONAL POLLUTANT DISCHARGE ELIMINATION
SYSTEM (NPDES) PERMIT TO DISCHARGE POLLUTANTS PURSUANT TO THE
PROVISIONS OF THE CLEAN WATER ACT

Cyprus Mines Corporation

has applied for a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit to discharge pollutants pursuant to the provisions of the Clean Water Act. This fact sheet includes (a) the tentative determination of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to issue a permit, (b) information on public comment, public hearing and appeal, (c) the description of the proposed discharge, (d) a listing of tentative effluent limitations, schedules of compliance and other conditions, and (e) a sketch or detailed description of the discharge location. We call your special attention to the technical material presented in the latter part of this document.

This Regional Office of the EPA has tentatively determined to issue a permit to discharge to the above listed applicant subject to certain effluent limitations which may require the installation of treatment facilities, schedules of compliance, and other conditions necessary to carry out the provisions of the Clean Water Act. These proposed limitations, schedules, and conditions are tentative.

Persons wishing to comment on the tentative determinations contained in the proposed permit may do so by the expiration date of the Public Notice. All written and oral comments should be submitted to EPA as described in paragraph 4. Public Comments of the attached Public Notice.

After the expiration date of Public Notice, the Director, Enforcement Division will make final determinations with respect to the permit. The tentative determinations contained in the draft permit will become final conditions if no substantive comments are received during the Public Notice period.

The permit will become effective 30 days after the final determinations are made, unless a request for an evidentiary hearing is submitted within 30 days after receipt of the final determinations. An evidentiary hearing will be granted only if it meets all the requirements of 40 CFR 124.74.

The proposed NPDES permit and other related documents are on file and may be inspected and copies made in Room 11C, 1200 Sixth Avenue, Seattle, Washington 98101, at any time between 8:30 am and 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Copies and other information may be requested by writing to EPA at the above address to the attention of Emma Cobb, New Source Permits Section M/S 521, or by calling (206) 442-1270. This material also is available from the EPA Idaho Operations Office, 422 W. Washington Street, Boise, Idaho 83702. A copying machine is available in the Seattle office for public use at a charge of 20 cents per copy sheet. The Freedom of Information regulations (40 CFR. 2.119) state that there are no charges if total fee is less than ten dollars.

The following materials contain a description of the applicant's discharge, a listing of tentative determinations of effluent limitations, schedules of compliance and other conditions of the permit, and a sketch or detailed description of the location of the discharge.

TECHNICAL SECTION

Cyprus Mines Corporation (7000 Yosemite Street, Englewood, CA.), a wholly owned subsidiary of Standard Oil of Indiana, proposes the construction and operation of an open-pit molybdenum mine and concentration mill southwest of Challis, Idaho (Custer County). The mine site is on land managed by the U.S. Forest Service (Challis National Forest) and the Bureau of Land Management (Salmon District) and is drained by Thompson and Squaw Creeks and tributaries thereof. Thompson and Squaw Creeks are tributaries of the Salmon River which (at the points of confluence with these streams) has been classified as a Special Resource Water by the State of Idaho, Water Quality Standards and Wastewater Treatment Requirements.

Cyprus proposes the construction of a non-discharging "tailings pond" which will receive all mine drainage, mill wastewater, and treated sanitary wastes from the millsite. (Sanitary facilities at the crusher site, located a considerable distance from the concentrator and other mill and office buildings, will discharge to a septic tank/soil absorption system). Carrier water used in milling operations will be drawn from the tailings pond. Runoff and seepage within the pit may be pumped directly to the mill but will otherwise be pumped to the tailings pond. Rather than proposing a discharge from the milling system, Cyprus anticipates a need for an average of 300-400 gallons per minute of "make-up" water.

The discharges proposed by the applicant consist of runoff and seepage from two areas planned for placement of overburden and waste rock. To minimize the discharge of eroded materials, settling ponds will be constructed which will provide for 24 hour detention of the anticipated normal high runoff, storage of settled solids, and retention of the projected 24 hour, 1-in-10 year storm event. The settling ponds are designed to achieve an average of 20 mg/l suspended solids (30 mg/l as a daily maximum) which is believed to be adequate for the preservation of water quality in the receiving streams.

In addition to the limitations on suspended solids, the proposed permit requires that pH (a measure of acidity) be not less than 6.5 nor more than 9.0 standard units in accordance with the State's Water Quality Standards for cold water biota areas. Leachate tests on waste rock indicate these limitations should be met without treatment.

The proposed NPDES permit will authorize discharges from two settling ponds to tributaries of Thompson Creek: Pat Hughes Creek and Buckskin Creek.

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